



Acknowledgments



Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

Helen Keller

By agreeing to assume leadership for the development of statewide training for early intervention service coordinators, I must surely have been either delusional or blissfully naïve. All joking aside and despite the scope of this project, this effort has truly been a labor of love that was born from the desire to make a difference in the lives of families of infants and toddlers with disabilities. It is to these families and their early intervention service coordinators that this effort is dedicated. I believe our greatest teachers will always remain the children and families whose lives we are privileged to join as partners on a journey of hope.

While it is not possible to acknowledge everyone who made significant contributions to this collection of work, I would be remiss if I did not attempt to express my appreciation to those who shared in this journey.

At the heart of this training project lies the voice of families of infants and toddlers with disabilities. It is their generosity in sharing their stories, offering suggestions, and allowing the use of their children's beautiful photographs that exemplifies the essence of this undertaking. It is my sincere hope that their contributions are accurately conveyed with the honor and respect they deserve.

Without the administrative support, guidance, and vision of Joseph E. Fisher, Assistant Commissioner of Special Education, and Brenda Bledsoe, Director, Office of Early Childhood, Division of Special Education, Tennessee Department of Education, this project would not exist. I am humbled by their faith and inspired by their vision for families and young children in Tennessee.

While in her position as program coordinator for Tennessee's Early Intervention System (TEIS)-Southeast District, Linda Hartbarger, East Tennessee Infant/Toddler Consultant, recognized the growing need for development of service coordination training. Despite limited staff resources, she sacrificed to make training a priority and entrusted staff time for this purpose. Her determination was central to the eventual development of this project, and is deserving of recognition and deep appreciation. Motivated by concern for children and families, Linda has promoted my efforts in a multitude of ways. She has been my mentor and friend, and has my highest regard.

Support from principal investigators (PI) associated with the TEIS grants in their corresponding districts in Tennessee was vital to this effort. Their combined expertise and direction were important as we conceived and built on this project.

Special thanks are offered to Sharon Wenz, PI, TEIS-Northwest District, who made substantial contributions through her leadership in developing competencies for service coordinators. She, Vicki Nance, Program Coordinator, TEIS-Northwest District, and Jamie Kilpatrick, West Tennessee Infant/Toddler Consultant further contributed by piloting the training at the University of Tennessee at Martin as an undergraduate/graduate level course through the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences.

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All coordinators tolerated the use of their own pictures, solicited family photos, answered questionnaires and provided feedback along the way. David Baker piloted the revised training with Holly Teffer, the first service coordinator to experience the revised core training. Dear friends, Dorothy Edwards and Barbara Kiser, even attempted to pry my hands away from the computer on occasion when I needed to be reminded that bodies are designed for motion. Barbara also helped in numerous ways with obtaining and readying the video tapes for distribution. Many thanks to all of you, for your continuing support.

Ongoing thanks are given to the early intervention service coordinators across Tennessee who contributed to this process by responding to questionnaires and participating in the review team process. Service coordinators designated as trainers in their districts were especially supportive as they offered seasoned advice as we made decisions. Jacqueline Davis-Keenan, Training Coordinator, TEIS-Greater Nashville District, was particularly helpful in offering suggestions as the competencies, trainer's guides, and portfolio guides were being developed as well as by offering feedback on the content of several modules. Having been an early intervention service coordinator myself, I continue to be impressed by the tenacious and selfless commitment early intervention service coordinators demonstrate as they go about their daily tasks. Their honest and forthright feedback based on years of experience made the training better and will positively affect families and young children.

I am deeply indebted to Alexis Burkett, TEIS Technical Assistance Program Coordinator. Alexis brought a new level of polish and consistency to the training through her superb skills as an editor. She and I alone have scrutinized every single word on every single page included in this project. I know of no one else who would unflinchingly confront this amount of information and painstakingly work to improve it, while maintaining a supportive and positive outlook.

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My deepest gratitude goes to the early intervention community of experts who willingly allowed the use of their own training and research materials to be included with and incorporated into our efforts. Larry Edelman, JFK Partners, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center; M'Lisa Shelden, Orlena Hawks Puckett Institute; Pat Putnam, New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Planning Council; Inez Ingle, Las Cumbres Learning Services; Robin McWilliam, Center for Child Development & Research at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital; Juliann Woods, Florida State University; Don Meyer, Sibling Support Project of The Arc of the United States; Kathie Snow, author and public speaker; Pat Linkhorn, Parent Mentor; and Janice Fialka, nationally recognized author and trainer, were particularly generous in sharing their work.

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A number of organizations also kindly gave permission for inclusion of materials that greatly enriched our training, including the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee, IDEA Infants and Toddlers Coordinators Association, Pathways Awareness Foundation, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), PACER Center, Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC), National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University, ZERO TO THREE, Intermountain Health Care Inc. Primary Children's Medical Center, Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services-Early Childhood Research Institute, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, among others.

Finally, to my family, there are no words sufficient to express my thankfulness for the support given while I worked on this project. Long nights at the computer and long hours in the office took time away from you. Still you understood my motivation and supported my efforts. Technical assistance provided by my husband proved invaluable. For your love and support, I will always be grateful.

Several of you are aware that I have been on my own personal journey in matters relating to my health while working on this project. As for many of the families of infants and toddlers with disabilities, that path is uncertain. I have gained a deeper appreciation for one of my favorite Helen Keller quotes, used in training module 6 ... *Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.* I am convinced that those who choose to work in the field of early intervention are particularly compassionate people. While I can never repay all the support and encouragement I have been given, I do offer my most profound gratitude.

Early intervention is an ever-changing field of study. By the time this training reaches its audience, revisions will already be needed. Without doubt, there are errors, omissions, and over-simplifications for which I assume full responsibility. I ask your patience and understanding in that regard. Despite those misgivings, it remains my sincere desire that by participating in *Tennessee's Early Intervention Service Coordination Training – Partners on a Journey of Hope*, that early intervention service coordinators will be encouraged, strengthened, and better able to support families of infants and toddlers with disabilities, because families deserve the best, and they depend on us.

Sincerely,

Susan

Susan Addison, M.Ed.

Training and Information Resource Consultant

Tennessee's Early Intervention System

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

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